



Bitterroot National Forest

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASES

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Second Fire Update for Monday, August 18, 2008

Bitterroot National Forest – August 18, 2008 @ 4:15pm. As the current fires become more active, smoke columns from several fires are becoming more visible to Bitterroot Valley residents. Here is an update as of 4:15 this afternoon.

- Although small size at ½ acre, the Big Creek Fire, two miles west of the Big Creek Trailhead, is producing smoke clearly visible to valley residents. This fire is located in steep, rugged terrain and the Forest is responding with a helicopter and bucket drops.
- The Lake Loma Fire, on the ridge between upper Blodgett and Sawtooth drainages, is now estimated to be 10 acres in size.
- A column of smoke that appears to be coming from upper Blodgett is actually the Elbow Fire on the Nez Perce National Forest.
- The Diamond Lake Fire, also on the Nez, is producing a column that appears to be coming from Lost Horse. This fire is actually located approximately 2 miles west of Bear Creek Pass.
- The Pettibone Fire, also on the Nez, is further west – approximately 10-12 miles west of Lost Horse drainage.
- The Forest is responding to a report of smoke near Carlton Lake on the Stevensville Ranger District. No fire has yet been confirmed in that location.

The remainder of the just previous news release – with a few minor updates – follows.

The Bitterroot National Forest reports at least 17 active fires within its management perimeter, but the most visible fire is just west of the Forest, and the Montana border in Idaho.

The Storm Fire, located in the Storm Creek drainage on the Clearwater National Forest, was started by lightning on August 9th. Relatively inactive for several days, it stayed at 2 acres or less in size until yesterday, when it grew to nearly 50 acres. With high temperatures yesterday and little overnight humidity increase, the fire remained active and Bitterrooters awoke this morning to a visible column of smoke.

The next few days are projected to be hot and dry – conditions that are conducive to active burning. By Thursday, fire weather forecasts predict much cooler temps with the possibility of rain. Forest Spokeswoman Nan Christianson indicates that the backcountry fires pose little threat but Forest managers are concerned about the possibility of human-caused fires in or near the wildland interface. Christianson urges landowners and recreationists to be particularly careful with campfires or any open burning, explaining, “any new starts in the wildland interface will have the potential to grow very quickly during the next 2 days.”

No official fire-related road closures or fire restrictions are currently scheduled on the Bitterroot National Forest but travelers should be aware of very limited access on the Hells Half Road, due to active burning on the Hells Half Saddle Fire. In addition, the Nez Perce National Forest is closing the Magruder – Elk City Road at Dry Saddle due to wildfires burning on their side of the divide.

Here's a run down of our current fires:

-- Kootenai Creek Fire, is located approx. 1 mile east of South Kootenai Lake in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness west of Stevensville. It is approximately 1/2 acre in size, and was started by a lightning strike on August 7th.

-- The South Fork of Big Creek Fire, also in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness west of Victor, is located approximately 1/2 mile south of Big Creek Lake. It was started by lightning on August 7th and is estimated to be 1 acre in size. A second as-yet unnamed fire is burning in the upper reaches of the drainage near Big Creek Lake. It is smaller than 1/2 acre in size.

- The Indian Creek Fire, located at the junction of Indian Creek and Schofield Creek in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, has burned actively yesterday and is nearly 60 acres in size. It was started by lightning on August 2nd.
- The Cooper Point Fire is located on the West Fork Ranger District near Paradise, and has covered approximately 40 acres.
- Kidney Lake Fire, on the Darby Ranger District, is also approximately 40 acres in size.
- Wapiti Fire is creeping around, covering approximately 15 acres.
- The Schofield and Schofield 2 Fires are each approximately 1 acre in size. These fires are located in Schofield Creek, in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, and were also started by lightning on August 1st.
- The Arastra Fire, started by lightning on August 1st, is currently ½ acre in size. It is on the ridge between Grizzly and Arastra Creeks in the Burnt Fork drainage east of Stevensville.
- The Lake Loma Fire on the ridge between Sawtooth and Blodgett, is located in high, rocky terrain on the Darby Ranger District and is less than 1 acre in size.
- Both the Lunch Creek and Eagle Creek fires have been inactive, and each is estimated at less than 1/10 acre.
- The East Stripe Fire, located southeast of XIII Mountain in the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness, has been inactive and remains at 1/10 acre.
- The Wood Hump Fire, also caused by lightning on July 18th has been burning actively and is approximately 2200 acres in size. It has spread from the Bitterroot to the Salmon-Challis National Forest, and is located in the upper reaches of the Selway River in the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness.
- The Hells Half Saddle Fire is located near the Magruder Corridor in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness. It was started by lightning on June 30th and burned very actively yesterday. It is currently estimated to be 1000 acres in size, and is impacting access to the Hells Half Lookout. Travelers in the area should expect access restrictions on the road to the lookout.

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